

## **WSDOT Public Transportation and Rail Division Monthly Report**

### **October 2005**

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The WSDOT Public Transportation and Rail Division Monthly Report highlights the division's progress and milestones reached in these areas:

- Division News
  - Transit Mobility
  - Public Transportation
  - Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation
  - Commute Trip Reduction/Transportation Demand Management
  - Upcoming Events
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#### **Division News**

##### **WSDOT helps celebrate debut of “County Connector” bus service**



Whatcom Transportation Authority, Skagit Transit, and Island Transit staff celebrate County Connector service.

New “County Connector” bus service started on September 6 to provide commuters with public transportation between Whatcom, Skagit, and Island Counties. Three transit systems, Whatcom Transportation Authority, Skagit Transit, and Island Transit are providing service for the two-year pilot program. Judy Giniger, WSDOT Public Transportation and Rail Division Director joined senators Mary Margaret Haugen and Harriet Spanel and others as speakers for the open house.

The new service gives northern sound residents direct transit access to the Skagit Multimodal Station in Mount Vernon, the central connecting point for riders. Travelers in the tri-county region are now able to access bus, rail and ferry service and airport shuttle services at regional transfer stations from south of the Seattle metropolitan area, clear up to the Canadian border.

The County Connector is made possible by a two-year, \$2 million grant from WSDOT with funds appropriated by the Washington State Legislature. WSDOT supports the development of connections between all modes with its Intercity Bus Program and new Regional Mobility Grant Program.

##### **WSDOT staff make presentations at annual transit CAC meeting**

WSDOT staff made two presentations at the September 20 Joint Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting for the state's transit systems. The meeting was held in Bremerton and hosted by Kitsap Transit System. Approximately seventy-five people participated, including transit system citizen advisory committee (CAC) members, general managers, and staff.

Judy Giniger, Public Transportation and Rail Division Director, was the keynote speaker. She provided an overview of WSDOT's role in funding public transportation in Washington State and described possible future funding strategies for the transportation system as a whole. Robin Phillips, the division's Administrator for Coordinated Transportation, made a presentation on the Regional Trip Planner project. She showed what the system will be able to do, how it will support trip-making by transit passengers, and how it will promote access to transit systems.

### **Feedback being gathered on the Public Transportation Conference**

To help plan next year's Public Transportation Conference & Expo, WSDOT is gathering feedback using a short online survey. If you attended the public transportation conference in 2005 or think you may in 2006, please take about 10 minutes to complete the survey before October 7 at [www.wsdot.wa.gov/transit/conference](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/transit/conference).

Over 175 people have participated in the survey and results are still coming in. Here are highlights of the preliminary results:

- Eighty-six percent of conference attendees expressed satisfaction with the overall conference.
- Attendees were most pleased with the registration process, conference program booklet, rail tour, and Recognition and Awards Banquet.
- When asked what workshop topics attendees would most like to see in 2006, rural public transportation and technology topped the list.

### **Conference materials available online**

Highlights from the 2005 conference as well as PowerPoint presentations and handouts from almost 50 workshops are now available at the conference web site at [www.wsdot.wa.gov/transit/conference](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/transit/conference)

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## **Transit Mobility**

### **WSDOT announces call for Regional Mobility Projects**

WSDOT called for applications for the 2006–2007 Regional Mobility Grant Program on September 16. The Regional Mobility Grant Program was created to fund public transportation projects that improve connections between transit agencies, rush hour transit on congested roadways, park and ride lots, and projects that reduce delay for people and goods.

WSDOT is accepting applications from local governments through November 1, 2005. The project proposals will be prioritized and submitted to the Washington State Legislature on December 1, 2005. The Legislature will make the final determination on projects and awards. The program could distribute \$20 million in grant funds provided through the 2005 Transportation Partnerships Package.

A workshop to assist prospective applicants in preparing their Regional Mobility Grant applications will be held on Tuesday, October 11 from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm at WSDOT's Office of Transit Mobility, 401 2nd Ave South in Seattle. More information about the class is available from Karin Lang at [langk@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:langk@wsdot.wa.gov) or (206) 464-1238.

Organizations interested in applying for grants can get the application and more information at <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/transit/otm/> or by phoning (206) 464-1238.

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## Public Transportation

### WSDOT managed ground transportation for hurricane relief efforts



A Transpro driver (left), Paratransit Services dispatcher, and WSDOT employee work together to provide hurricane-related transportation.

Under Operation Evergreen, Washington State's relief effort following Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita, WSDOT took the lead on coordinating emergency ground transportation for over 2,000 people who arrived in the state from the disaster areas. Starting Labor Day weekend through September, Barb Savary, of the Public Transportation and Rail Division, worked with private and public operators to transport people to housing, medical appointments, and basic services.

Statewide coordination was required to plan and deliver service, purchase bus passes, and contract for reimbursement from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Medicaid's transportation brokerage system provided rides for people with special transportation needs.

WSDOT also worked with transportation providers to plan for the possibility of receiving airplanes full of passengers. Washington State was prepared to transport evacuees from the SeaTac airport to the Tumwater Welcome Center with just hours of notice. Although FEMA did not send any flights to our state, the exercise improved readiness for emergencies that could occur in our own state.

### WSDOT to contract for wheelchair-accessible vehicles

WSDOT is coordinating a group purchase of vans and minivans with wheelchair lifts. By purchasing vehicles as a group, organizations can save up to \$3,000 per vehicle, avoid administrative costs and ensure compliance with federal and state regulations. WSDOT plans to request bids in mid-October, select the contractor in mid-November and have vehicles delivered in the spring.



WSDOT anticipates awarding a contract for 15–25 wheelchair-accessible vans and minivans. Customized seating configurations may be selected to meet local needs. Those interested in purchasing the vehicles may contact Hiep Tran, public transportation procurement specialist, at (360) 705-7875 or [tranh@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:tranh@wsdot.wa.gov).

### WSDOT Grants Team will make statewide site visits

In September, WSDOT staff completed eight official visits with recipients of WSDOT's public transportation grants. The purpose of the visits is to verify and provide assistance toward agency compliance with state and federal funding regulations. During October, WSDOT staff will conduct twelve site visits across the state.

Before the end of 2005, WSDOT staff will visit fifteen other grantees. For more information, contact Patty Alvord at [alvordp@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:alvordp@wsdot.wa.gov) or (360) 705-7979.

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## Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation

### ACCT looking for a consumer representative

The Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation (ACCT) has an opening for a consumer representative. The position, appointed by the Governor, will represent consumers of special needs transportation services. People with special transportation needs are defined in state law as people “including their personal attendants, who because of physical or mental disability, income status, or age are unable to transport themselves or purchase transportation.”

The council meets the first Friday of even-numbered months 9:30 a.m.–12:00 p.m. There may be additional workgroup activities. If you or someone you know is interested in serving as a consumer representative on the council please contact Don Chartock at [ChartoD@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:ChartoD@wsdot.wa.gov) or (360) 705-7928. For questions about the application process with the Governor’s office, contact Shana Melanson at [Shana.Melanson@gov.wa.gov](mailto:Shana.Melanson@gov.wa.gov) or (360) 902-0388.

### ACCT facilitated workgroup on for special needs transportation regulation

The Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation has convened and facilitated two meetings for a workgroup that is proposing statewide regulation for all special needs transportation providers. Currently, only nonprofit providers of special needs transportation are regulated through the Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC).

Expanding the coverage of the UTC regulations to include private for-profit providers would increase safety and bring standards into line among different communities. Without statewide regulations, local jurisdictions have proposed local rules which would prohibit transporting riders back and forth between communities. The options for regulation will be presented to the ACCT Council and the UTC.

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## Commute Trip Reduction/Transportation Demand Management

### Trip Reduction Performance Program to call for projects

In early October, WSDOT’s Trip Reduction Performance Program (TRPP) will call for projects that help get people out of their cars and onto buses, trains, and vanpools. Private employers, public agencies, developers, and property managers are eligible to compete for funding.

An organization can earn up to \$100,000 per year by creating a project that reduces the number of employees who drive alone to work. WSDOT will reimburse startup costs and, for projects that successfully get people to take a bus, a bike, or use another commute alternative on a regular basis for one year, WSDOT will compensate organizations for each trip reduced.

Proposals will be due on November 18. To help potential applicants prepare proposals, trainings will be available in mid- to late October: two in western Washington and one in eastern Washington. More information, including training schedules and an application form, will soon be available at [www.wsdot.wa.gov/tdm/](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/tdm/)

To view a summary of the proposal and other materials describing the program redesign, visit <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/tdm/taskforce/tfmaterials.cfm>

### CTR Task Force approved draft legislative proposal

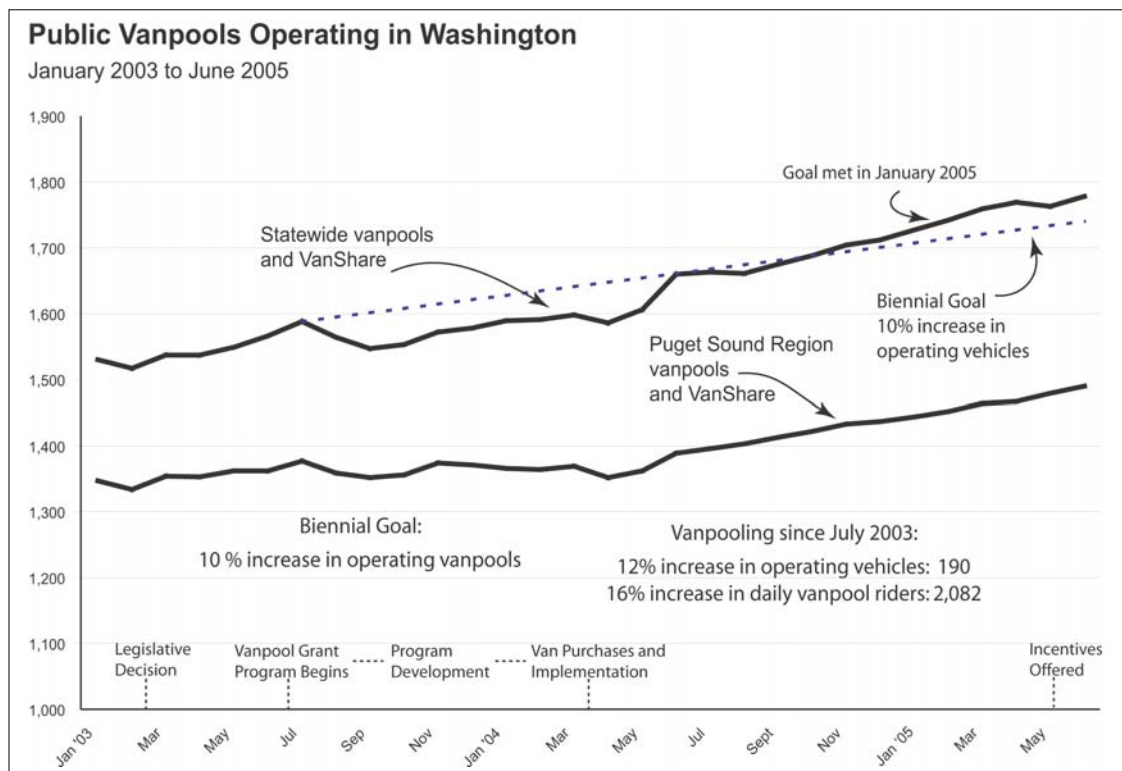
On September 23, the Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) Task Force approved a draft proposal to the 2006 Legislature recommending changes to the CTR law. The proposal will now be shared with the Transportation Secretary, the Governor's Office, key legislators, cities, counties, regional transportation planning organizations, and other interested parties. As the public outreach process continues, proposed refinements will be brought back to the Task Force for discussion.

## Vanpool Ridership Update

In the 2003–2005 biennium, the Vanpool Investment Program exceeded its biennial goal of 10 percent increase in vanpools. Operating vanpools increased by 12 percent and daily vanpool ridership by 16 percent. As of the end of June 2005, there were 1,778 vans in operation and 14,823 daily riders statewide. With WSDOT-administered grant funds, ten transit agencies purchased 170 vans and five new vanpool programs were formed.

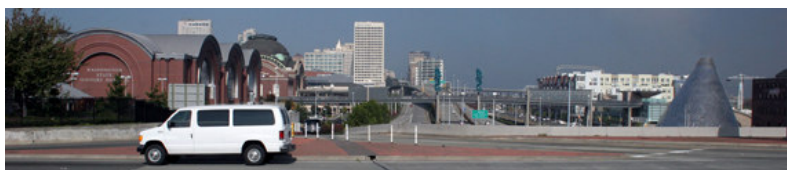
Since the end of the biennium, as the price of gas has climbed, most operators are reporting that demand for vans exceeds supply and that they are filling existing vans to capacity. WSDOT staff and the Statewide Vanpool Team are working closely together to utilize all available resources.

The Legislature authorized \$5 M for the Vanpool Investment Program in the 2006–2007 biennium. For fiscal year 2006, seventeen operators have estimated a need for at least 175 vans to satisfy new demand, more than the 170 ordered for the entire 2003–2005 biennium.



## Vanpool campaign and Pierce Transit win national award

The public awareness campaign, “Freewheeling. Vanpooling is your trip, your way,” was developed by WSDOT and the state’s transit systems to increase vanpool ridership. Development of the campaign required extensive and detailed coordination. Pierce Transit, the lead agency in creating the look and feel of the campaign, recently received a national award from the [Association for Commuter Transportation](#) in the category of Outstanding Service (Partnerships).





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## Upcoming Events

October 11, Tuesday

### **Regional Mobility Grant Workshop**

9:30 am–12:30 pm

WSDOT Office of Transit Mobility, 2nd Floor Conference Room

401 2nd Ave S.

Seattle, WA 98104

For more information, contact [Karin Lang](#) at (206) 464-1238.

October 11, Tuesday

### **Office of Transit Mobility's Grant Technical Work Group meeting**

9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

WSDOT Urban Corridors Office, 401 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue South, Suite 300

Seattle, Washington

For more information, contact Theresa Smith at [smithtl@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:smithtl@wsdot.wa.gov) or (206) 464-1282.

October 14, Friday

### **Office of Transit Mobility's Advisory Committee meeting**

9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

WSDOT Urban Corridors Office, 401 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue South, Suite 300

Seattle, Washington

For more information, contact Theresa Smith at [smithtl@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:smithtl@wsdot.wa.gov) or (206) 464-1282.

October 20 and 21, Thursday–Friday

### **Sound Transit Expert Review Panel**

8:30 am–5:00 pm both days

Harbor Steps Conference Center, 1301 First Avenue, Seattle

For more information, call 206-239-1807 or visit [www.wsdot.wa.gov/partners/erp/about.html](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/partners/erp/about.html)

October 28, Friday

### **Commute Trip Reduction Task Force meeting**

Tukwila Community Center, Tukwila

11:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m., followed by subcommittee meetings. For more information, contact Shelley Pedro at [pedros@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:pedros@wsdot.wa.gov) or (360) 705-7846.

December 2, Friday

### **Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation meeting**

9:30 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

The council is devoting its October meeting to a planning retreat. To confirm times and locations for meetings, visit: [www.wsdot.wa.gov/acct/acct\\_meetings.htm](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/acct/acct_meetings.htm)

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The WSDOT Public Transportation and Rail Division prepares this monthly newsletter as a service to those interested in the activities of the division and its partners within the agency. To receive your own copy via e-mail or for questions regarding newsletter articles, please contact Tonia Buell, communications manager, at [buellt@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:buellt@wsdot.wa.gov) or 360-705-7439.